

Foreword

Arno Sonderegger

On the occasion of the centenary of the First Pan-African Congress, a group of scholars from three continents (Africa, America and Europe) interested in the history of Pan-Africanism met at the University of Vienna in May 2019 to discuss “the Long History of Pan-African Intellectual Activism: More than a Centenary”.¹ The idea for the present volume was born during this event, but the published result is not representative of the wide range of issues debated at the conference – particularly regarding the fields of literature and the arts. What became clear at the event though, was that there is not one single history of Pan-Africanism to be told but a variety of differing histories as there are so many different views and perspectives gathering under that term’s umbrella; hence this volume draws attention to the “*Histories of Pan-African Intellectual Activism*”.

A second aspect of the title that requires discussion is the term Pan-African. “*Pan-African*” is many things at once, its meanings manifold; and opinion on the nature of Pan-Africanism is not uniform. The concept’s contents and limitations are present in every single contribution to this volume, but particularly relevant to the two opening articles. They explicitly address questions of definition and deal with varying stances and attitudes among Pan-Africanists of all colours. Arno Sonderegger addresses Pan-African ideas that matter in these respects, and urges to tell the history of Pan-Africanism anew. Dominik Frühwirth, in his account on Rastafari’s place in Pan-Africanism’s history, follows the trace from Ethiopianism to Pan-Africanism highlighting the relevance of Christianity and African spirituality in its development.

A third element in the title to this volume that needs some clarification is the focus on intellectual activism with regard to Pan-African histories. What

¹ The conference program can be accessed at
[https://www.academia.edu/39125808/The Long History of Pan-African Intellectual Activism 1919-2019](https://www.academia.edu/39125808/The_Long_History_of_Pan-African_Intellectual_Activism_1919-2019) [09.01.2020]

is meant by "*Intellectual Activism*"? Of course, it is not pure thought void of life, but thought created by men – and women; embedded in specific social practice, evolving from certain cultural circumstances; and being part of some kind of collective enterprise. To address ideas in such a fashion is to aspire to more than simply a history of ideas but an *intellectual history* for which the contexts, in which ideas have been developed and flourished, are as relevant as the content of the ideas itself; for, in fact, without their contexts they would amount to nothing.

Pan-African Intellectual Activism in the 20th century could manifest itself at the top and forefront of the political game – on both global and national levels – and in profound entanglements with global liberation struggles. This is borne out by the contributions of Katharina Wurzer on the short-lived Mali-Federation, of Tunde Adeleke on Kwame Nkrumah's turn to "revolutionary warfare" during his time of forced exile in Guinea, and by Immanuel Harisch on Walter Rodney's "student radicalism" in Tanzania. However, it could play out on other levels than state-centred nationalist politics just as well.

This is where the longer and deeper history of Pan-Africanism enters the picture. Here, the formation and make-up of collective (Pan-African) identities came less via unification in face of a common enemy – as was the case in late colonial times when anti-colonialism served as the most useful common denominator for the various "national" movements in the African "colonial" territories. It came instead in the form of thoughts and conceptualisations of a particular "*African personality*" rooted, in one way or another, in "*Africa's*" very "*nature*"; the latter was considered by some in terms of "*race*", by others in geographical terms turned into longing ("*place of origin*"), by still others in spiritual and religious terms ("*state of mind*"). These issues are discussed, in some detail and with differing accentuation, in the two opening articles already mentioned.

They are, however, especially virulent in (Pan-African) conceptualisations and works of art and literature; from the beginnings of *Négritude* in the 1930s to African art production in and for the international arena today. The final contribution to this volume by Silvio Tamaso D'Onofrio and Arno Sonderegger gives a glimpse of this. They chart the early career of the Afro-Brazilian poetess and novelist Ruth Guimarães in the late 1930s and 40s. The complex connections and entanglements between the African continent and the African diaspora through time, and the global power order, in which

Africa ranks lowly, make for a pretty complicated if extremely intriguing history. The contributions to this volume on the histories of Pan-African intellectual activism try to unravel some of the mystery and confusion surrounding Pan-Africanism's history. Hopefully, they help to communicate a wider view on Pan-African strategies and tactics and make them available to all who are actively involved in the ongoing struggle of making the world a better place.